

Anarchism's Posthuman Future

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ABSTRACT

In previous work, we have argued that there are considerable areas of overlap between anarchism and complexity thinking, in particular because both explore the possibilities for the development of order without a specific source of authority. In more recent interventions we have developed a posthuman world view as a political project based on a foundation in complexity thinking. Hierarchical and exclusive forms of social organisation are usually understood by anarchists to be forms of domination. It is unsurprising then, that the history of anarchist thought and practical political engagement demonstrates a concern with an eclectic range of dominations. In this paper, we argue that in questioning our treatment of the environment, or 'nature' and in problematising some of our relations with non-human beings and things, some anarchism usefully informs the politics of posthumanism.

We trace the past and contemporary linkages between anarchism and post-humanist thinking, drawing on literature in the overlapping fields of political ecology, new materialism and animal studies. However, we also argue that there is a contradiction embedded in arguments for the liberation of human and non-human beings and things and a recognition that our world was ever more-than-human. The western conception of the human as an autonomous, rational being able to make decisions and choices about actions has only developed alongside, and in contradistinction to, the 'animal'. These conceptions of autonomy and rationality have been important to all western left political projects, including much of the politics of ecology and anarchism, where the notion of 'freedom' is writ large. If anarchism is to have a posthuman future, we consider that it needs to interrogate and perhaps loosen its ties to some established conceptual building blocks of the western political tradition.

Keywords: *Anarchism, posthumanism, complexity, liberation*

In previous work, we have brought together insights from complexity and anarchist thinking to develop an alternative, posthuman, conceptualisation of international relations (Cudworth and Hobden, 2010). We have argued that there are considerable areas of overlap between anarchism and complexity thinking, in particular, because both explore the possibilities for the development of order without a specific source of authority. Both pose similar questions about social organisation. We have contended that both anarchist theory and anarchist politics – opposed as they are, to a range of dominations that they see as interlinked and interdependent – are compatible with complex systems analysis. Our more recent work has built on a foundation in complexity thinking to develop posthumanism as a political, emancipatory project (Cudworth and Hobden, 2015a; 2018).

In a similar way to other critical approaches, most notably Marxism(s) and feminisms, anarchists understand the world as constituted by social hierarchy and institutionalised oppression and domination. Hierarchical and exclusive forms of social organisation are usually understood by anarchists to be forms of domination. It is unsurprising then, that the history of anarchist thought and practical political engagement demonstrates a concern with an eclectic range of dominations; or what we might call intersectionality (Nocella et al, 2015, p10). Complexity thinking, we have argued, provides an effective way of theorising such intersectionalised forms of exclusion (Cudworth and Hobden, 2011). Multiple forms of social domination have been at least as significant in anarchism as the focus on the state and governance; for some scholars and activists, more so. This concern with challenging multiple sites of power has led to anarchism being presented implicitly as a challenge to dominatory power. The coupling of anarchism with other explicit challenges (anarcha-feminism, anarcho-communism, green anarchism, queer anarchism and so on) illustrates the eclecticism of the anarchist challenge. Here, we want to suggest that in questioning our treatment of the environment, or ‘nature’ and in problematising our relations with non-human beings and things, a range of anarchist perspectives usefully inform the politics of posthumanism.

The aim of this article is to develop further our earlier ideas on posthuman political theory (Cudworth and Hobden, 2011; 2013a; 2013b) and focus specifically on the notion of emancipation or ‘liberation’ in the context of the attachments identified by a posthumanist political perspective (Cudworth and Hobden, 2015a). We trace the past and contemporary linkages between anarchism and posthumanist thinking, drawing on literature in the overlapping fields of political ecologism, new materialism and animal studies. However, we argue that there is a contradiction embedded in arguments for the liberation of human and non-human beings and things and a recognition that our world was ever more-than-human. The western

conception of the human as an autonomous, rational being able to make decisions and choices about actions has only developed alongside, and in contradistinction to, the 'animal' (Cudworth and Hobden, 2014). Central to the enlightenment project was the view that nature was other to the human, something to be understood scientifically for the purposes of control and exploitation (Plumwood, 1993). These conceptions of autonomy and rationality have been important to all western left political projects, including anarchism. If anarchism is to have a posthuman future, we consider that it needs to interrogate and perhaps loosen its ties to some established conceptual building blocks of the western political tradition.

The article begins by outlining different perspectives on the contested notion of posthumanism and delineating our own use of the term, linked to a complexity framework. We then consider the ways in which the anarchist tradition might reflect elements of a posthumanist perspective, assessing the classical tradition of Peter Kropotkin and Élisée Reclus, followed by the more contemporary perspectives of Murray Bookchin, Bob Torres and Brian Dominick. There are certainly influential anarchist posthuman futures clearly outlined within anarcho-primitivism. We will discuss and critique the work of John Zerzan and David Watson whose ideas echo some of the 'after-the-human' futures associated with the eclectic field of posthumanist thinking. Our own ideas for a posthuman anarchism, however, do not take us 'back-to-the-future', rather, they draw on a range of perspectives which suggest possibilities for posthumanist emancipation that do not envisage an apocalyptic future of population reduction and life lived off the grid and in the woods.

WHAT IS POSTHUMANISM?

Posthumanism is a term which is currently making a significant impact across the social sciences. However, it has been used in a variety of way (Wolfe, 2010, pxi) – some of which contradict the way in which we deploy the term. We have previously suggested that posthumanism has been used in three principle ways: in the sense of a world after humanity, as forms of body modification and transhumanism, and, our own usage, a world comprised of the more than human. Hence we do not use the term to signify a world *after* humanity (see Cairns, 2005; Zalasiewicz, 2008). While we would acknowledge that current human practices have the potential to bring this about, our concerns are with a world in which humans are very much present. Nor do we employ the term in the in the sense of *transhumanism* – the implications that various forms of body modification have in questioning the boundaries between the human and non-human (Haraway, 1985; Hables Gray,

2001; Savulescu and Bostrom 2009). We regard this work as a form of hyper-humanism rather than as a concern with the 'more than human'.

By contrast, our posthumanism develops from complexity thinking in the social sciences. Such an analysis argues that complexity is a feature that can be observed across a range of both animate and inanimate systems. Complex thinking is not a normative approach in itself; it has been applied across a range of social science disciplines and has been particularly influential, for example, in Business Studies. However, it can also be used to highlight the hierarchies of power and forms of exclusion both within human systems (Walby, 2009) and between human and non-human systems (Cudworth, 2005). What is particularly significant for a posthumanist analysis is that complexity thinking highlights the interconnected character of systems, and provides us with a way of highlighting how human systems are totally immersed within a range of human and non-human systems (both animate and inanimate). Within a complexity framework, human activity cannot be separated from interactions with the rest of nature and such a framework usefully enables the political and intellectual aim of posthumanism – that of challenging a human/nature divide. Crucially we regard posthumanism as a challenge to the humanist notion of human beings as somehow unique or exceptional. By contrast, the human species is not just 'in' nature but is rather 'of' nature.

We have argued for a posthumanism that is concerned with a world made up of the more than human. This is not to deny the social world, but to argue that it is embedded in and dependent on non-human systems. An emancipatory posthumanism finds its inspiration in both a reduction of oppression within and across species barriers and in developing a more sustainable relationship with the rest of nature. In short, posthumanism provides a critique of the notion of human exceptionalism – summarised by Donna Haraway (2008, p11) as 'the premise that humanity alone is not a spatial and temporal web of interspecies dependencies'. The central contribution of posthumanist thinking is to encourage a view of the world which sees the human species within such a web of co-dependencies on both animate and inanimate systems.

Recent analysis of climate change would suggest that that web of inter-dependencies is becoming severely disrupted, with potentially disastrous consequences for the human species. What also needs to be remembered is that climate change is already proving disastrous for a number of other species (Kolbert, 2015) and other systems. In this context, it is unremarkable that anarchism, with a history of championing the significance of mutualism, might have something to say about the precarity of our current condition and the role of systems of domination in contributing to this.

POSTHUMAN INFLUENCES IN THE ANARCHIST TRADITION

As Richard White and Colin Williams note, 'anarchist thought has mobilised not only around opposition to the state and capitalism, but in opposition to all forms of external authority and thus all forms of domination' (2012, p1629). Hierarchical and exclusive forms of social organisation are usually understood by anarchists to be forms of domination, and anarchism has been preoccupied with a range of dominations – around race, ethnicity and nation; caste, class and wealth; formations of sex, sexuality and gender; colonialism, imperialism and warfare. Analyses of domination have also been used to understand our relationships to other species and to the planet, but rarely in explicitly anarchist ways. In this part of the article, we examine anarchism's 'posthuman past' – legacies of more-than-human thinking within the anarchist tradition, and its 'posthuman present' – more contemporary work connecting anarchism to the domination of the non-human world, particularly non-human animals.

Anarchism's posthuman past

The body of work left by key anarchist figures such as the geographers Kropotkin (1842-1921) and Reclus (1830-1905) continue to enjoy well-deserved recognition and influence in anarchist work and critical thinking more broadly in terms of their critiques of the market and the state. Less attention, however, has been paid toward their writings which re-position humans as being a part of, rather than apart from, nature; and both observe commonalities between human and animal communities.

In his most celebrated work, *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin (1998 [1902]) noted how few animal species exist by directly competing with each other compared to the numbers who practice 'mutual aid', and suggested that those who do are likely to experience the best evolutionary prospects. Kropotkin argued that the metaphor of the survival of the fittest had become the central way in which evolutionary theory had been explained. The focus on competition over-stated one aspect of evolution, ignoring the significance of co-operation within species; rather, 'sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle' (Kropotkin 1998 [1902], p24). Starting with an examination of non-human animals Kropotkin claimed that 'natural selection continually seeks out the ways precisely for avoiding competition as much as possible' (1998 [1902], p72). Given this, it is, therefore, unlikely that humans should have flourished so successfully without co-operation (1998 [1902], p74). Mutual aid has been, Kropotkin argues, a feature of human existence that has

widened its reach, ultimately potentially to the whole human species and beyond its boundaries (1998 [1902], p234).

The story of evolution in Kropotkin is not one of a path towards fixed things, but a process of relationships and linked becoming. Species is not a fixed taxonomy but about the recognition of what Darwin calls 'differentiations'. *Mutual Aid* stressed the process of evolution as one where successful adaptation and exploitation of evolutionary niches is secured by species' propensity for co-operation and solidarity. This order can be spontaneous and progressive. Mutual aid is an organising force across a range of species, as a 'factor of evolution' that enables species, including humans, to flourish.

While Kropotkin's key insight is the notion of humans as embedded in relationships with other species, and as animals amongst many others, Reclus provides a more explicit challenge in terms of the need to confront 'the animal question' as intrinsic to anarchist projects. In this and in countless other ways, Reclus clashed directly with the conservative and deeply speciesist moral codes of the society in which he lived (Clark and Martin, 2004, p33).

What is particularly interesting is the way in which Reclus encourages personal, subjective, and emotional (empathetic) connections to be made by his reader. In *On Vegetarianism*, for example, Reclus suggests the exploitation of nonhuman animals by appealing first to his reader's emotional registers, rather than developing an argument based on enlightenment humanism (such as rights-based theory). The central argument is founded on personal and intimate reflections, which strike the heart of the reader far more intensely than appealing to the more abstract, mass killing of nonhuman animals. Reclus (1901, p1) offers this reflection:

Other pictures cast their shadows over my childish years, and ... mark so many epochs in my life. I can see the sow belonging to some peasants, amateur butchers, and therefore all the more cruel. I remember one of them bleeding the animal slowly, so that the blood fell drop by drop; for, in order to make really good black puddings, it appears essential that the victim should have suffered proportionately. She cried without ceasing, now and then uttering groans and sounds of despair almost human; it seemed like listening to a child. And in fact the domesticated pig is for a year or so a child of the house; pampered that he may grow fat, and returning a sincere affection for all the care lavished on him, which has but one aim—so many inches of bacon. But when the affection is reciprocated by the good woman who takes care of the pig, fondling him and speaking in terms of endearment to him, is she not

considered ridiculous—as if it were absurd, even degrading, to love an animal that loves us?

Reclus's approach is to personalise encounters with non-human animals in such a way that encourages the reader to empathise closely with the memory, while also (hopefully) reflecting meaningfully on their individual experiences of similar examples of horrors. Undoubtedly, Reclus's distressing childhood experiences and encounters of violent human/nonhuman animal encounters encourage the reader to see the violence against other creatures embedded in our daily lives and practices (see White, 2015). In 'On Vegetarianism', Reclus entreats us towards a future in which we and our surroundings 'become beautiful' in a world without animal abuse.

While Kropotkin's entreaties for the acknowledgement of mutualism and the embedding of all creatures in 'federations' of life is one based on apparently dispassionate observation, Reclus draws on personal experience to engage an empathetic response from the reader. Such an understanding of our close relations with some other species and the entangled lives we live is, as we will later see, a feature of current feminist work on which anarchist posthumanism might usefully draw. Importantly, these notions of entanglement and shared empathy—of the kind demonstrated in Reclus and often marginalised in political thought—suggest the importance of attachments-with-others and raise questions for the political subject of liberal humanism that undergirds notions of 'freedom' and of 'liberation'.

Anarchism's posthuman present

Many of Kropotkin's ideas are elaborated in the work of Murray Bookchin, who has been instrumental in linking anarchism to green social and political thought in the development of 'social ecology'. The notion of overlapping and intersected forms of social domination which are systemic and co-constituting is clearly compatible with an intersectionalised analysis of social domination. In addition, Bookchin's understanding of the hybridised and amorphous nature of contemporary political systems embedded firmly in the social fabric and constantly in the processes of arranging and rearranging social life – can be given a posthumanist reading (in particular Bookchin, 2005, pp191-200). However, although Bookchin is to be applauded for his conception of humans as in and of nature, he holds to a problematic human exclusivity when it comes to considering relations between human and other species.

A mechanism by which he does this is the distinction between 'first' and 'second' nature. For Bookchin, humans as a species have developed to an exceptional degree such that they have produced a 'second nature', that is, a 'uniquely human culture, a wide variety of institutionalised human communities, an effective human technics, a richly symbolic language, and a carefully managed source of nutriment' (Bookchin, 1990, p162). An important distinction between human and non-human nature is hierarchy, 'institutionalized and highly ideological systems of command and obedience', which are an 'exclusive characteristic of second nature' (Bookchin, 2005, p26). Over time, Bookchin suggests that hierarchic relations emerged related primarily to gender, age and lineage, developing into the range of hierarchic distinctions that typify the contemporary world. Our current malaise is a result of an evolutionary history containing two competing logics – that of spontaneous mutualistic ecological differentiation, and that of social domination (Light, 1998, p7). As with Kropotkin, Bookchin considers that species exist in relations of mutual interdependence and co-operation and the concept of species co-evolution and 'federations' of life forms, runs through both *Mutual Aid* and *The Ecology of Freedom*.

However, Bookchin's narrative sits within the enlightenment paradigm where the human subject has pre-eminence. Despite Bookchin's concern for the human treatment of the non-human, *The Ecology of Freedom* tells the story of a human evolution to a higher level of consciousness culminating in a state of 'free nature' in which intra-human hierarchies are dissolved and the domination of the environment is no more. It is inferred by this that animals will be liberated through our enlightened protectionism, which enables other species to flourish. However, the human domain remains unique and distinct (Bookchin, 2005, p458). While we would concur with Bookchin that the human world has certain unique properties, the hard distinction of human worlds from those of all other species is an unnecessary and humanocentric move. Bookchin is careful to track the development of different forms of intra-human domination, their distinct qualities and co-constituted aspects. When it comes to the human domination of 'first nature' however, there is a reductionist argument made that the end of intra-human domination will simply result in the demise of the exploitation and oppression of non-human beings. In sum, Bookchin's intervention effectively bolsters human exceptionalism. We humans are collectively, uplifted subjects, with exclusive agential powers to enact both our own liberations, and that of others.

Despite this, Bookchin (and Kropotkin) provide us with a useful legacy. For example, the insight that many species have overlapping forms of 'species life' with humans, with certain needs, forms of sociality and ecological and cross-species

dependency; the challenge in Kropotkin of the presumption of human separateness from 'other' animals, arguing that we should think about 'differentiations' rather than differences. Differentiations of species, and particular social, economic and ecological contexts give rise to different kinds of human animal relationship that sociological animal studies has been concerned with, such as the use of certain non-human animals as labourers of various kinds; as food and resources; as 'companions'; as human entertainment and so on. We might best understand these socially constituted categorisations as carrying relations of human power, and that power is very often not benign.

More recently, anarchist scholarship has specifically focused on the relationship between humans and other animals, and considers species difference as a form of social domination. Of particular note is the work of Bob Torres (2007), who applies David Nibert's (2002) model of animal oppression to the case of highly industrialised capital-intensive agriculture in the global north, and in doing so, explicitly links it to anarchist politics. In addition, there is the important pamphlet by Brian Dominick (1995; 1996; 1997), *Animal Liberation and Social Revolution*, which outlined the similarities in perspective between anarchism and veganism, broadly defined in terms of living a life which is as compassionate as possible towards animals, including of course, human beings.

Capitalism has, as Torres rightly suggests, 'deepened, extended and worsened our domination over animals and the natural world' (2007, p3). Whilst human and non-human animals are exploited under capitalism, the forms of exploitation differ. The bodies of non-human animals are not only exploited by working for us in order to produce animal food products, their bodies are *themselves* commodities, as he puts it: 'they are superexploited living commodities' (2007, p58). Animal lives and bodies are a means of profit creation within capitalism. In addition, animals are property, and this relationship of ownership over animal bodies is essential for the extraction of profit. Animals-as-property means that, in the case of animal agriculture for example, animals are 'sensate living machines' for the production of commodities (2007, p64). For Torres, capitalism remains the key analytical device throughout, and his analysis of human relations with non-human domesticate animals is conceptually underpinned by notions of property relations and commoditisation.

Torres sees a critique of domination and a contestationary politics of non-domination as key to anarchist politics (Torres, 2007, pp85-7). For Torres, the domination of the non-human animal world is an instance of highly normalised and everyday oppression in which most western humans are much invested. It is also crucial to understand our relations with non-human animals as integrated into

intra-human exploitative and oppressive structures. The analyses of linked dominations and of the politics of non-domination could have played a greater role in Torres' analysis however. While he allows that the histories of exploitative systems are different and differentiated (2007, p156), and that the oppression of animals can exist before and beyond capitalism, his analysis of the oppression of animals, however, is focused on one systemic cause: 'If we're to be successful in fighting oppression – whether based on race, class, species or gender identity—we're going to need to fight the heart of the economic order that drives these oppressions. We're going to have to fight capitalism' (Torres, 2007, p11). This is ultimately, a reductionist position and a more fully intersectionalised analysis requires the broader notion of multiple domination, such as is found in Bookchin.

This broader perspective comes through strongly in the pamphlet by Brian Dominick which argues that contesting domination is key to vegan politics. However, in further reflecting on his earlier work, Dominick has some harsh criticism for Torres: 'Even in a book that levels a masterful argument against exploitation of animals, naming capitalism as a lynchpin of oppression, Torres remarkably makes no case for the real-world effectiveness of the veganism he advocates, practiced on an individual or even a mass scale' (2015, p32). In reflecting on the publication of *Veganarchy* more than twenty years ago, Dominick (2015, p23) contextualises his intervention in terms of the need for: 'a truly humble, empathic, animal-respecting stance [which] was conspicuously lacking in anarchism—even the "green" varieties, namely social ecology, anarcho-primitivism, and deep ecology. Despite the fact that these intellectual tendencies focus on the environment, they were fundamentally humanistic or mystic in orientation'.

In *Veganarchy*, Dominick calls for anarchists to recognise the imposition of social categories on animals. Non-human species are not 'less' than humans, rather, this hierarchy is constantly reproduced by the active dehumanisation of animals and the reinforcement of separation. This hierarchy is political, and anarchists sensitive to the naturalisation of categories of oppression (in terms of gender or race or ability and so on) should be attuned to those generated by the politics of species domination. In addition to an objection to hierarchy, anarchists are called to oppose the exploitation, violence and alienation experienced by non-human animals as well as the alienation of many human labourers in such industries, and avoid as far as possible, the consumption of products based on the exploitation and suffering of animals. The intersectionalised nature of the domination of animals means that veganism becomes part of the multi-faceted resistance to the dominant social paradigm that is anarchism: 'Only a perspective and lifestyle based on true compassion can destroy the oppressive constructs of present society ... This to me is

the essence of anarchy. No one who fails to embrace all struggles against oppression as his or her own fits my definition of an anarchist' (Dominick, 1997, p13).

On reflection, in an afterword to the third version of *Animal Liberation and Social Revolution*, Dominick softens this line and suggests that whilst social revolution is needed in all spheres of domination, including our relations towards non-human animals, we must see compassionate living as a process rather than an end state. It is an ideal which few if any of us will realise, but a struggle to be engaged with. Indeed, the struggles in countering multiple dominations and oppressions in daily life mean that our political choices are always compromised and complicated. Most recently, Dominick (2015) rejects what he sees as a fundamentalist culture that has, on many levels sought to appropriate the term *veganarchy* over the last twenty years. He critically addresses the limits of a militant or dogmatic interpretation and makes a persuasive case for development of a more nuanced understanding of veganism and anarchism, one composed of constellations of values and principles – a more intersectionalised understanding, perhaps.

Dominick's plea is for veganism to be understood as part of a process of human liberation which enables us to 'free' animals from exploitation and oppression. What 'agency' non-human animals might have is a topic of keen debate in animal studies. In the social sciences, agency has been attributed to beings with desires, intentions and wills and this definition certainly applies to some non-human species, certainly to those animals within agricultural complexes and many of those kept as pets in the west. Many species, particularly domesticates, have a sense of selfhood. They can exercise choice and communicate with humans and other species (however much the content may be open to interpretation) as fellow agentic beings. Yet what might constitute 'liberation' for other species we might never know. Indeed, our very language of 'liberation' is both humanist and human-centred. In his afterword Dominick wisely eschews the term 'liberation' for animals in favour of terms such as freedom from exploitation and violence, which he sees as essential to the anarchist project of freedom for all. It is here that anarchism might usefully revisit notions of freedom, autonomy and liberation – all key concepts with which anarchism has postulated our political futures—with a critical and posthumanist eye.

POSTHUMAN FUTURES

In this second half of the article, we consider the possible political futures emerging from a politics which recognises both the more-than-human constitution of our world and that lived practices, social relations and the nature of being are altered by

such multiple constitution. Some of these reconceptualisations of the human take the form of nature writing to rekindle the 'wild within'. Others are more overtly political such as the primitivist position associated with Zerzan and others, which has overlaps with the politics of deep ecology. A second approach is to become more 'creaturely' by shrinking the imperial elements of the constitution of the human in order that we look at other species and scapes without a colonial gaze. Finally, there is the reconfiguration of the human through entangled politics. Our own posthuman and post-domination future draws on ecological feminist and other perspectives in suggesting an embodied politics of creaturely entanglement through which we might both reconfigure the human and become free.

Back to the future – anarcho primitivism and feral politics

According to anarcho-primitivist authors like Zerzan (1998; 1999; 2004; 2008) and Watson (2003), complex social systems require continual sacrifice, people and other creatures may simply disappear. Yet in modern industrial societies the 'sacrificed' are hidden away, such that we do not see mass violence-like extinction – as violence. For Zerzan, industrial societies involve mass extermination of life – for example industrial systems build in acceptable losses of life – in terms of deaths from airborne pollution, for example.

Zerzan (2008) considers that humanity's fall from grace did not begin with industrialism or even with agriculture, but with the embrace of symbolic culture, i.e., language, art, and number. Culture, rather than being viewed as our great emancipator, is seen by Zerzan as a form of undesirable mediation which distances us from our capacity to realise ourselves within the moment. Zerzan argues that what he calls 'original' human societies in the Palaeolithic and similar societies today such as indigenous groups locations experiencing very minimal interaction with modernity live a non-alienated and non-oppressive form of life based on primitive abundance and closeness to nature. Zerzan's *Future Primitive* (1994) and its sister (2012) are an unequivocal assertion of the superiority of hunter-gatherer lifeways. Zerzan rejects the thesis that the cultural practices and technologies of modernity are neutral, rather, these developments are carefully constructed means of enslaving people. Zerzan uses anthropological studies from 'original' and 'primitive' societies as the basis for a wide-ranging critique of aspects of modern life and to suggest these are a political ideal or model, for future development, or rather, de-development and de-domestication.

Like Zerzan, Watson wants us to re-imagine what it means to be human by becoming de-domesticated, less civilised and connecting with our animal nature.

In his best-known work, *Against the Megamachine*, Watson draws on the thinking of archaeologists such as Marshall Sahlins and Mircea Eliade and powerful critics of 'First World' society such as Lewis Mumford, Ivan Illich and Vandana Shiva to argue that contemporary notions of 'progress' (defended by those such as Bookchin and Chomsky), must be abandoned to the nineteenth century in order to make anarchism fit for purpose in the twenty-first. Key to this critique and to that of Zerzan, is the idea that in industrial modernity, humans have lost species authenticity and no longer understand what it means to live well as a human animal. What is needed in this context is to reclaim our authenticity. While Zerzan has held fast to this opinion, Watson (1997) has come to argue that a 'reasoned primitivism' is necessary. This is focused on critiques of social domination and strategies for social change rather than the individualised becoming of de-domesticated human animals 're-wilding' themselves.

This difference in position is obliterated in Murray Bookchin's (1995) anarchist critique of the anti-civilisational and anti-technological perspective. He argued that Zerzan's representation of hunter-gatherers was flawed, selective and often patronisingly racist, that his analysis was superficial, and that his practical proposals were nonsensical. Ultimately, civilisation is to be defended, for

To malign civilization without due recognition of its enormous potentialities for self-conscious freedom – a freedom conferred by reason as well as emotion, by insight as well as desire, by prose as well as poetry – is to retreat back into the shadowy world of brutishness, when thought was dim and intellectuation was only an evolutionary promise (Bookchin, 1995, p56).

The critique of western civilisation is potent, however, and has been influential in contemporary anarchist developments at the intersection of anarchism, political ecology and animal liberation, both theoretically and practically. In a recent essay, Mara Pfeffer and Sean Parson (2015, p126) argue that enormous numbers of human animals are killed, mutilated, poisoned or abused by industrial capitalist systems, alongside countless billions of non-human animals. Thus:

... there can be no total liberation: no end to colonization, genocide, or animal exploitation, without addressing the root problem of our era – industrial civilization. We argue that animal liberationists, anarchists, and all people concerned with exploitation and suffering need to reject the dreams of techno-utopias, worker-run industrial factories, and post-scarcity eco-communism. If we wish to live and see life flourish on this planet, there is only one alterna-

tive: we must envision a politics centered around burning down the factories, dismantling the energy grid, and liberating all animals, human and nonhuman.

‘Total liberation’ (Best, 2011a; Best, 2011b; Colling, Parson and Arrigoni, 2013) considers that human liberation requires animal and earth liberation as well. Further, for Steven Best, ‘liberation’ in the form of one manifestation of oppression/domination, such as ‘race’ for example, may not be secured in isolation from other varieties which co-constitute them. Thus humans cannot be ‘free’ while continuing to exploit the labour and bodies of non-human animals. Total liberation, because of this, requires a move away from the ideas of ‘progress’ which have been bound up with colonial and capitalist forms of development. For Pfeffer and Parson (2015, pp136-7) however, to apply primitivist politics with ‘total liberation’ means that primitivism needs to be far more critical in its analysis and deployment of the notion of ‘animality’: ‘It is not good enough to call for a politics of “rewilding,” where humans reconnect to their “natural” animality because colonialism, classism, racism, and sexism have worked in tandem to construct what the term means’. The primitivism they advocate is a ‘feral politics’ of compassion and solidarity where the goal is to dismantle the social and economic systems that are killing this planet. In addition, we need a politics to create real and lasting communities, not only between humans but also between humans and the more-than-human world.

This is understood however, as a politics of liberation. Recent publications in Critical Animal Studies (for example, Nocella et al, 2014) contain a range of interesting contributions all of which skirt round the question of what it might mean from a green, anarchist and critical animal perspective to speak of freedom. Some suggest a politics of ‘groundless solidarity’ in which, we must ... struggle to help non-humans create spaces where they can flourish and develop their own organic relations and communities (Colling, Parson and Arrigoni, 2014, p68).

Colling et al go on to explain that this means fighting against institutions that imprison, abuse and kill non-human animals (like those of farming and experimentation), supporting those animals who ‘resist their human oppressors’ (such, perhaps, as those escaping from farms or slaughterhouses), and stopping the geographic marginalisation of wild animals. But this is not ‘liberation’ in the conventional sense as deployed in western political theory. Supporting farmed animals through the sanctuary movement is a demonstration of care and respect for animal-being, rather than an act of liberation in which non-human animals are set free. Feminist scholars in particular might agree, sceptical as many are of projects for ‘liberation’ cast in the mould of enlightenment humanism (Braidotti,

2013). The notions of 'emancipation' and 'liberation' are drawn around the liberal subject of enlightenment humanism who seeks autonomy. Even the feral politics, the becoming animal of anarcho-primitivism, is caught in the humanist trap, for as individuals becoming more authentically human, we realise our freedom in autonomous lives without the trappings of domesticity.

We have recently (Cudworth and Hobden, 2015a) argued for a critical post-humanism that is *for* all that lives, and *for* the purpose of eliminating multiple forms of oppression. Whilst this chimes with advocacy of 'total liberation' (Best, 2010), it is not entirely clear what advocacy of eliminating oppression or securing various liberations might entail as we challenge the 'intricate interrelationship' of 'hierarchical power systems' within which humanity and the natural world are exploited (Best, 2007, p3). Some feminist work has allied itself strongly with a politics of animal rights and a stance of 'total liberation' (Jones, 2004). But within feminist animal studies there tends to be more tolerance of a diversity of perspectives and engagements (see Gaard, 2012). In part, this is because there has been a concerted attempt to disturb the human/animal binary through a critique of liberal humanism and the articulation of different kinds of positions on embodiment and materiality. This is a very different trajectory from that of animal rights theory or much political ecogism which has tended to try and empty moral theory of its humancentric biases whilst still holding fast to anthropocentric humanisms moral and methodological commitments to reason (Diamond, 2008). Feminism has been far more attentive to the ways anthropocentric humanism, ironically, influences debate on what emancipation for humans, other animals and 'nature' might mean.

In developing a politics which contests oppression, it is important to remember that the concepts of liberation, emancipation and rights draw very heavily on the same European enlightenment humanism which informed a model of political and cultural universalism that has had disastrous consequences for many peoples and non-human lifeworlds. While much has been written to effectively critique the liberal humanist underpinnings of colonialist and imperialist endeavours in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, liberal humanism persists still in the language of animal rights, just as it undergirds notions of human rights. But does a problematising of the liberal and enlightenment foundations of emancipatory agendas mean that they cannot be disentangled from the imperialist missions and human-centred humanism? This needs to be carefully negotiated. As emancipatory politics has learned to its cost, conceptions of liberty, rights, wellbeing and so on are fraught with contradiction, and this is why an emphasis on the intersectional qualities of domination is so important. What unites various forms of critical scholarship is an understanding of 'humanity' as embedded in networks of relations of depend-

ency with the non-human lifeworld, and seeing the fragility of embodied life, both human and non-human. Living in the woods as a more authentic animal does not foreground our embedding, but is individual and an esoteric journey back to an 'authentic self' which never was.

What other sources might we draw upon then, in leaving the imperial human behind? There are many sources of inspiration for posthuman futures and we draw on two feminist accounts here – Spinozist 'renaturalisation' of a rather different kind with Hasana Sharp's 'philanthropic posthumanism', and the ecofeminist ethics of Lori Gruen and her conception of 'entangled empathy'. The form of embodiment recommended by Zerzan, as we have seen, embraces the sensate in understanding our animal selves. A rather different approach to embodying the human is to consider the human as sharing embodied vulnerability and exposure and to recommend a politics of engaging with others, rather than one of becoming. In such engagement we might reconstitute our ideas of the human without resorting to a crude notion of de-domestication that denies our co-evolved histories and lifeways with other species, domesticate and not.

PHILANTHROPIC POSTHUMANISM

Drawing inspiration from the work of Benedictus de Spinoza, Hasana Sharp (2011) advocates a 'philanthropic posthumanism'. Spinoza's 'system' provides a productive basis for a posthuman analysis, because for Spinoza all that exists is essentially of one substance and indivisible. Humans as a species do not stand in a 'supernatural' position to the rest of nature, yet nor should we view ourselves as 'subnatural' – we are simply part of nature. As Sharp (2011, p5) explains, Spinoza's philosophy aims to undermine those perspectives that see the human as either 'defective gods or ... corrupt animals who need to be restored to our natural condition'.

What, then, for Sharp is the character of 'philanthropic posthumanism', and towards what or who is the philanthropy directed? Sharp argues for a renaturalisation of human relations with the rest of nature. By this she means 'a new appreciation of ourselves as parts of nature, operating to the same rules as anything else, invariably dependent upon infinitely many other beings, human and nonhuman' (Sharp, 2011, p5). Drawing in particular on the work of Elizabeth Grosz, Sharp views a renaturalisation as part of a political project that not only concerns inter-human relations but also relations across the species barrier. However, she is also keen to maintain Spinoza's view that the rest of nature does not provide a model for humans to aspire to as Zerzan attests. Rather her aim is to navigate 'between supernaturalism and subnaturalism' (Sharp, 2011, p6).

From the perspective of contemporary concerns about rights for non-human animals some of Spinoza's comments are, in the least, regrettable. For example, Spinoza (cited in Sharp 2011, p109) argues that 'a law against killing animals is based more on empty superstition and womanish compassion than sound reason', furthermore 'our advantage teaches us to establish a bond with men, but not with beasts'. We also need to acknowledge Spinoza's misogyny. Yet Sharp argues that comments such as these need to be considered within context. Spinoza makes no claims about human exceptionalism, nor does he see characteristics as being unique to humans. Spinoza's concern, in terms of our considerations of other animals, is that these not become the measure of human morality or a guide for judging human activity. As Sharp (2011, p189) states 'Spinoza's concern with beasts is almost entirely unrelated to the codification, legal or moral, of human behaviour toward nonhuman animals'. Rather his concern is with the possibility of 'the eruption of an anticivilization ethos that treats beasts as exemplars for human to imitate and to admire'. This relates to the view of humans as subnatural, which for Spinoza is both unethical and makes no sense within the understanding of his system. An example would be those within the ecological movement who see humans in a particularly negative light with regard to their relations with the rest of nature or who, like Zerzan and Watson, see humans as inauthentic animals corrupted by civilization – for Spinoza this would be another form of humanism. Rather, we should accept our position within nature, a renaturalisation.

In avoiding both subnaturalism (the liberal humanist position) and subnaturalist (those who would take nonhuman nature as the model for human activity), Sharp argues for philanthropic posthumanism. Such an understanding of Spinoza emphasises the potential for positive interactions between actors. Sharp, following Deleuze, argues for a broadening from Spinoza's emphasis on inter-human relations to a consideration of the possibilities of positive interactions across the species divide. This is described as 'ethological ethics'.

For Sharp, there are no grounds within Spinoza's system for drawing a boundary in terms of interactions between species. Indeed, Spinoza's system emphasises, as seen above, that human activity cannot be seen as distinct, or independent of the rest of nature. Yet while the move to consider the possibilities of 'enabling encounters' across species boundaries, we need to remain aware of Spinoza's cautionary remarks. Sharp (2011, p217) notes that 'a turn to the animal, to be liberating, must not be an expression of melancholy or felt powerlessness. Antipathy and misanthropy will, according to Spinoza, infect any political program with sad passions that will ultimately hamstring any efforts at liberation'.

As Sharp acknowledges, the context in which we might consider interactions between identities has changed. Spinoza's concern was to overcome divisions within the human fraternity brought about through religious schisms – something he encountered at first hand. This perhaps explains his focus on the human. For Sharp, in changed circumstance, and with changed knowledge, 'we may need a new universal'. Posthumanists have pointed to our constitution not only by fellow humans but also by a range of animate and inanimate entities from robots to bacteria to companion species. Sharp (2011, p218) observes that in denying these co-constituting entities 'we mutilate ourselves and the sources of power in our midst.'

A 'philanthropic posthumanism' seeks thus to pursue the benefits to all from positive interactions, 'not governed by the image of man, or even the human' (p219). However, for Sharp, to avoid these interactions becoming affected by negative thoughts the human species needs to accept its place in nature. While this may be an embedded position, it cannot account for the very concrete difficulties which all kinds of radical political ecologism – anarchist, socialist, feminist, primitivist and coalitions thereof – have pointed out. Here, the human is a flattened category – there are men, and sadly, for Spinoza, there are women, but the other differences which fracture the human are absent for both Spinoza and for Sharp. May an entangled ethics be better placed to take account of the co-constitution of our world and the tensions and differences this involves? While we consider this first below, a further issue with which this article closes is that of the context in which humans (for Spinoza) or all beings (for Sharp) might flourish. As Chris Cuomo (1998) argued some time ago, ecofeminist ethics might be based around conceptions of enabling entangled life to flourish, but this should be framed in the political and social context of community.

ENTANGLED EMPATHY

For Lori Gruen, our relationships with non-human nature should be based on an entangled empathy. Traditionally, extending our thoughts about ethical behaviour towards non-human animals has been based on questions of 'likeness'. So that in the same way that rights have been gradually extended within the human community, rights can be extended to non-human species on the basis of their similarities to us. This has resulted, for example, in arguments that rights should be extended to other great apes, based on our very close evolutionary development (for example, the case of Sarah an orang-utan who was granted legal personhood in an Argentinean court). Likewise, arguments have been

made regarding personhood for dolphins given their intelligence and rich social lives.

This approach, derived in particular from the work of Peter Singer (1975) is described as 'widening the circle' – in other words attempting to extend the moral boundary to those closest to the human. The problem, from a posthuman perspective, is that this is a thoroughly humanist position, in that it maintains the human as the yardstick by which other species are judged – those that are closest to the human ideal will be the first to be included within the ethical community.

Lori Gruen instead argues that we should begin a notion of empathy. While acknowledging that the practice of widening the circle has helped in considering and highlighting the plight of those nonhuman species closest to us, it has not had significant practical results. In widening the circle there will always be an excluded other. An alternate position would be to accept that our lives are 'entangled' with the rest of nature, and to consider the ethical consequences that emerge from this situation. As Gruen (2013, p224) 'indicates, when we acknowledge this we can begin to reflect on the nature of those relationships in an effort to be responsible to those with whom we are engaged'. In reflecting on those relationships it is not simply an issue of projecting our own impressions onto the other's perspective, but 'working to try to grasp the perspective of the other' (Gruen, 2013, p225). For Gruen, such understanding across the species boundary requires us to learn about the behaviours of other species and maintain an awareness of the co-constituted character of our relationships with other species (p226).

While there are clearly difficulties involved in empathising and particularly across species boundaries, Gruen's point is that it not only is possible to empathise with non-human animals, we have an ethical duty to those with whom we are entangled. For Haraway (2008), important in realising the potentials of human-animal relationship is direct embodied experience where we 'meet' and share across the species barrier, co-constituting one another. While this position has similarities to the cross-species relations of entangled empathy, there is an important additional point to note in Haraway's account – social context. We encounter other species and are entangled with them in specific spaces and places, in social institutions and practices. As Haraway (2008, p5) puts it, we are 'beings-in-encounter in the house, lab, field, zoo, park, office, prison, ocean, stadium, barn or factory'. Both Sharp and Gruen have a tendency to detach the relations between humans and the 'others' of nature from their social context and the relations associated with these. A renaturalised ethics of flourishing and an entangled empathy needs, in our view, to be a situated ethics – one of posthuman community.

Posthuman community

The imperative of posthumanism, in our view, is to develop tools for promoting an understanding of human embeddedness in non-human animate and inanimate systems. In addition, a *critical* posthumanism is required. For example, in our recent work on the more-than-human nature of warfare (Cudworth and Hobden, 2015b) we argue that exclusively-human warfare would look very different but for the drawing of an enormous variety of non-human creatures (from bees to elephants to orcas) into the practices of warfare means that the constitution of war is qualitatively altered. Posthumanism urges us to attend to the realities of our situation in a world where we are all made up of multiple species and things. A posthuman account not only includes animals, it draws our attention to the co-constitutive character of human/non-human systems. Erika Cudworth's (2011a, 2011b, 2017) work on companion animals in human households and public places argues that the spaces of dog walking are those of beings-in-encounter which can be seen as posthuman micro-communities (of dogs and human companions) which emerge over time through routine practices and have particular characteristics. Cudworth's research, in East London, and rural Leicestershire demonstrates the emergence of communities made up of people and dogs from a large variety of backgrounds and socio-economic locations. Posthuman communities are also distinctly located. The practice of walking through a particular space leads dog walkers to a knowledge of the places through which they walk and to the development of practices of care for those spaces and the creatures they encounter there – including other humans and other dogs. Non-human animals are also productive in the generation of relationships. There are 'cross-pack' relations in terms of intra-species and trans-species companionship and conviviality. Communities of dogs and human walkers are thus posthuman in two ways: in being made up of relationships between dogs and human guardians, and in terms of the ways such relations change the ways in which both humans and dogs engage with other beings. This has implications for how sociologists (and others) understand the notion of community and suggests the possibility of a diversity of beings in various spatially located communities.

In a similar way spaces of war are also spaces of beings-in-encounter through which particular communities emerge. They are very different spaces – often of tension, of threat and danger, though also ones in which humans and dogs, camels, horses and so on may 'hang out' together. Humans and animals may be cast together suddenly as unlikely co-actors in the theatre of war and the rather different communities that emerge are likely to have specific characteristics. These

are issues we would wish to further explore through case studies of particular conflicts, and the interrelations with specific species. It is also the case that in the entangled relations and spaces of warfare empathetic relations emerge.

An ethics of entangled empathy and philanthropic posthumanism, emergent in contexts of posthuman community problematises institutionalised mass killing of humans and non-humans, and the destruction of the living world more widely in practices both overtly political (such as the practice of war) and social (such as the ruination of waterways on which multispecies communities depend, or the operation of the global industrial-food system). A posthuman politics raises questions for the liberal humanist subject and the struggle for rights, for freedoms and for 'liberation'. We are in this world together, and might never be truly detached, despite all the struggles of Empire in its many guises. Yet we might resist domination, enslavement and exploitation from a position of flourishing for ecological communities.

CONCLUSION

In advocating a critical politics of posthumanism, we stress the importance of an analysis which stresses the common constitution of all living things. A systems analysis derived from complexity theory allows for the analysis of the interactions between human and non-human systems and between animate and in-animate systems. This forms the basis of an ethic of care and responsibility, of entangled empathy, which does not cease at the species border.

We have suggested that despite a legacy and a presence of ecological politics and critical animal studies scholarship, anarchism, like many critical political traditions, often remains wedded to human-centred and human-defined concepts of the political. Feminist approaches such as those described here have been an important counter to this. In both feminist animal studies and ecofeminism a politics and ethics of embodied vulnerability and entangled existence leads us away from the political agendas of rights for non-humans. Does this really get us away from the human? In sum, despite an acknowledgement of embodiment, of attachment in relational and often deeply material webs, such analytics is a construction of our world through human discourse. As Erica Fudge (2003) repeatedly emphasises in her discussion of 'animal', we humans simply cannot 'get away from ourselves' so that all talk of relationality, embeddedness and so on is articulated through human language, culture and understandings of the world. Like Fudge, we consider this is regrettable but inevitable; we might question our legacies and prejudices, but we cannot actually think otherwise.

For the critically posthumanist perspective we advance, human lifeways have incredible impacts on all other species and living things – we already intervene massively in the non-human through agriculture, industry, fishing, building or mining. The question for those seeking posthuman emancipation is about the re-appraisal of current interventions on non-human worlds, and the development of more creaturely ways of being where we accept our place with other species and things and as far as we are able, act with compassion. Posthuman community understands our embedding in complex living systems as characterised by diversity and difference, while also being attuned to an agenda set by the radical politics of intersectionalised ecologism which resists the instrumentalisation, enslavement and destruction of non-human being. It is this kind of collective resistance which we would emphasise as a means to securing a more creaturely politics. We do not need to go back to get to a posthuman future and can safely leave Zerzan alone in the woods.

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